

On the Ecology of the Orc

"They are superior to men, in all ways, except one." -Gorgonson, Avatar of War

Nomenclature: Orc

Description: Brutish, Green Skinned Humanoids

Things that are known:

- They despise men and are hated by elves

Rumors and other whispers in the dark:

- There is no difference between man and orc. Orcs that live in cities *become* men, just as men who live in the wild become orcs. It is a dark secret, full of shame, and hidden from the elves and dwarves.
- It is said that sudden shock or extreme stress can cause a human to become a semi- or half-orc
- Orcs are giant aggressive plants
- Orcs are from another world, near the end of it's life-cycle. They were the only race to flee to our world, proof that brute force is the ultimate survival trait
- Orcs are the reincarnation of wicked dwarves
- Orcs are creatures of fae, born male
- Orcs are the cancer of the world, they are corrupted growth, festering in unseen places. They have no gods before them, gods being a projection by other races. The "one eyed" they worship is their singular purpose, to grow until the whole world suffers and dies
- The orcs are a forgotten placeholder, a bookmark that was never removed due to the gods own destruction
- Orcs are what happens when teen mothers drink during pregnancy in a fantasy world
- They are the next devolutionary step, one step further down from the result of elves breeding with apes to make humans. They are the coming dominate race, a cosmic secret only a few know.
- Orcs are not a separate race, but instead *all elves wearing masks*
- The brain chemistry of an adult orc is unstable. They require proteins from intelligent creatures to survive, and these proteins are better absorbed in the adrenalin rush of life or death. Stress, both physical and mental retards the breakdown process, as does intense anger and hatred. The only hope for a peaceful orc is self-mortification, extreme exercises, and a complex or possibly magical diet
- They are simply angry over centuries of bigotry
- Orcs are an escaped modular-adaptive-lifeforms, The life-form mimicked the most successful species, which at the time was neanderthal man. They evolved into their current stable state, their natural traits (fear of magic, power worship, shamelessness and fecundity) are outgrowths of this
- "Orc" is just a derogatory term for people suffering from force-field mutations
- Orcs are cruelty of dreams and foul thoughts made flesh. They cannot be slain, for doing so only creates more orcs. Their elimination requires unconditional human peace



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- Orcs are the result of humans consuming troll flesh. It is all too easy to feed a large army with troll flesh, no matter how dire the consequences. Halflings turn into goblins. Elves turn into Bugbears, Gnomes and giants find the flesh deadly to consume. Mermaids turn into Sea hags.
- Orcs are the reflection of man from a once distant dimension merged with ours. Neither can achieve their potential while the other exists, and this is knowledge only the orcs have. Killing humans is a deeply spiritual duty for even an Orc, even if it's not something they eloquent often.
- Orcs are symbiotic with humans, linked by the whim of the gods. Every human has his opposite orc, when one dies, the other dies as well. Should a linked pair meet, they merge to create a new creature, a 'half-orc'. Sages say, a true neutral half-orc is destined to end the conflict, though the nature of the reckoning is debated
- Orcs are mutant elves, caused by the influence of iron on their reproduction
- Orcs are an alloy of goblins and humans. When they are burned together in a cramped space, the adaptability of humans is fused with the violent tendencies of goblins. Orcs lord over goblins because they consider themselves the next step up. There are rumors orcs could be 'broken down' into their base components, but goblins, orcs and men all agree this is likely a terrible idea.
- Orcs are scaled, cyclopean, fish-lipped monsters. They fire a ray beam from their single terrible eye, based on the color of orcs.
 - Some say that this is because the orcs were slaves to the eye tyrants, the first of whom was a mad sorcerer, who gave up his humanity to become a floating head. He then created many different cyclopean creatures, orcs being the lowest.
- A druid once desired peace, so he created a spell to remove all negative emotions, motives, and energies from humans and demi-humans. Sadly, his drug use had addled his brain and the casting was corrupted. Instead of removing the emotions, he made them manifest in the world. Worse still, humanoids retained all their basic motivation (excepting a few races on Krynn). Every orc is the hate, envy, lust, greed, violence, gluttony, and sloth of a living humanoid made manifest. Every time a human is born, a new orc is born that gives little thought to the humans passing
- Elves are divine spirits made manifest in flesh. They reproduce by cultivating new natural spirits. Sometimes this process gets corrupted and an orc develops. Like elves, they take form fully grown of spirit melded with matter. However they can use any matter and spirit to propagate. They murder and rape to ensure both new spirits and the raw material to install them in. They are born with the impulse to reproduce obsessively. After much pillaging, they either die or begin to settle.
 - Older orcs focus on other things: Refining their spiritual potency and eventually becoming demons, seeking out stasis and calm in nature, or perhaps becoming brood mothers who birth new warbands. Any orc will tell you it is foolish to depend on elves for anything, much less the future of the species.
- Orcs are an experiment by half-lings to create pig cheese. Results were mixed
- Orcs are descended from pigs. Or a culture obsessed with pigs. Breeding pigs, powering things with pig sacrifice. Suddenly people began giving birth to pigs. Or pig people. They were quietly enslaved and sacrificed and worshiped. This tenuous situation lasted only a while, then revolution began, and the orc as we know it today emerged.
- Orcs are manifestations of the wild places, boars and pigs and savagery sprung from something much more ancient than man.
- Orcs are the rational, revolutionary potential of mankind, freed from gods and their endless mechanisms of control. They aren't angry or violent by some intrinsic nature, they just have no patience for god-fearing, reactionary, bigoted humans. Better to put them all down

- Orcs are a symbiote race, host to a strain of fungus granting them toughness and increased strength and aggression. It makes them hunger for human flesh, but only to complete their nutritional needs. They are nihilist humans, derived from an intelligence not freed from the needs of the fungus
- Orcs are mudmen that have coagulated into solidity. Their anger is at their inability to flow and merge with the foul waste that birthed them. Slaying an orc causes it to crumble like damp earth.
 - Sites where many orcs have died, become spawning pits for mudmen
- You can use Faunal Succession to tell the length of time a body has been dead, for different creatures live off of it at different times. So it was with the titans, for the lizards feasted first, then dwarves, then elves, then humans, and finally the orcs
- Orcs are the result of casting 'reveal invisible' on invisible servants. They aren't supposed to be here and they know it
- Orcs are demonic footsoldiers and come in a variety of forms
- Orcs are invisible spirits that ride and corrupt the flesh of the dead. When risen, their flesh reforms, horribly, becoming an orc
- Orcs are a common result from exposing humans to the energies of the underworld till they are driven mad. One human becomes a hundred orcs as their personality splinters and manifests in reality. The leaders and spellcasters are the larger chunks of the original personality. The original can be unthinkable powerful, and is often well protected, because it is said if you kill it, all the others will cease to exist
- Orcs are what happens when you feed elves after midnight
- Orcs were the largest and most organized bandit gang in the world, transcending cultures and borders. It has long ago collapsed, but many hold to their traditions, pig-like masks, savage dress, and horde tactics
- Orcs are a tool of the gods to curb population growth. When successful, they turn on each other, leaving areas depopulated
- Paladins sometimes raise orc troops, but must provide an opponent. Sport is not enough, their violent nature is too much, starting riots over slurs, bad calls, or injuries. Respect for brute force and eye for an eye runs deep
- Orcs are from a twisted mirror of the real world. In the dark world, they fight and murder and die in 'cities' of the real world. When an orc dies, another bursts from its skull 9 days later. They are summoned into this world by sorcerors in foul rituals, but they are never under the sorcerer's control. They only answer to the ork king in the heart of the dark world. The ork king wishes for nothing more than to be freed from his prison
- They are frankenstein like bipedal pigs, their eyes hide no intelligence that you would wish to use speech to communicate with, and they are surrounded by an aura of flies. They are said to follow, ant-like, a massive queen ork
- Orcs are perfected elves, without vanity and with motivation. Everything that orcs are, is what an elf was meant to be
- Orcs are all little pieces of different gods, eternally at war with each other
- Orcs are the broken parts of a singular large being, their low-level species-wide telepathic bond allows one orc to fill in for another that is absent. Their odd bumps and pits are indications of the marks where they join
- Orcs are a natural phenomenon that exists outside the natural order to support it. They clear away the dead brush and allow new, stronger, creatures to take hold. Comfort and stagnation call to them, their presence an irritant. They will not leave these blights till they are burned, any more than you would leave rotten food in your cupboard
- Orcs are the shameful creations of dwarves.

- To understand this, you must understand dwarves. To reproduce, they carve each other from different kinds of stone (Granite, marble, basalt). This is why the dwarves dig, to make more dwarves. But that is also their downfall, because sometimes they dig too deep. Throughout the ages, several dwarf clans attempted to 'improve' on the dwarf. Gnomes were forged from Clay, Sandstone, and limestone. Azers were cast from molten bronze, but once completed move to the plane of fire, never to return. Orcs are made from pig iron, and turned on their creators, driving them out and killing those left. They opened the passages to the deep and sealed the entrances and forge new orcs to this day. They raid for iron and more iron to propagate as far and deep as they can
- Orcs are created slave soldiers. All their traits that would be non-adaptive for their environment, make them better soldiers and less threatening to their creators (Stupidly brave, easy to bully, Malthusian fecundity, fast life cycle). "Following orders" isn't an excuse, but a genetic imperative. Excess orcs are sent away to live off the enemies land, or abandoned. Female orcs are breeding machines, that rarely leave their pits. They must be supported by human races, since the orcs aren't capable enough farmers to feed themselves.
- Orcs are simply humans exposed to unhealthy space radiation. This causes them to give into their base desires, and wish to drain the ID from humans, via crude eldritch trepanning. Those who survived became orcs themselves, but sterile. Sometimes matriarchs would gain enough ID from humans that they would become sated and give birth to horrible creatures.
- Orcs are driven by a vice, while different in each it is inescapable. Wrath is the most prevalent, as they tend to kill those who are not wrathful themselves. Greed, pride, lust, and envy exist in smaller numbers, accounting for orcs of subterfuge and cunning. Slothful orcs are the most rare
- Each race was crafted from a different element. Humans from water, elves from wood, dwarves from metal, gnomes from earth and orcs from fire. Halflings are not original, crafted perhaps from the void. When the creators craft a species from air, it will mean a fundamental change in the world
- Half-orcs are sometimes called 'forks' because of their split from both human and orc
- Half-orcs aren't orcs, but the spawn of humans and animals
- There are no orc females. They procreate by impregnating females of other species. Birth usually kills the mother. The offspring is always full blooded orc
- Orcs are the insurance plan of the gods against the outsiders. You wouldn't bet on humans, dwarves, or elves to save the world? But a horde of orcs?
- There are only female orcs. In fact, elves have 1 male and 2 female sexes, with the other female sex being orcs. A pairing of two elves always produces elves, but a pairing of orcs and elves produces either a male elf or a female orc. There is a very low chance of an elf/orc coupling producing a male elf, so most outsiders don't even realize that they are the same species
- Orcs just are. Nobody made them. They have no destiny. Their rage comes from the fact that the gods hate them and keep trying to kill them like they are weeds
- Before the empire collapse, the Orchulli clan took to banditry and cannibalism in order to survive. Once discovered, they were locked in their house and burned alive. Later, tunnels were discovered beneath the cellar. It was assumed that this was an escape route, but it just led deeper and deeper into the dark, joining the natural caverns below. The clan mated and bred with what they found below and have been returning to the surface ever since
- Ancient scrolls contain the ritual to make elves into orcs, but as the population of elves thinned the knowledge was lost. So the ritual has been adapted to work on humans, and even mud in some cases. A poorly worded wish may be the origin of female orcs

- Orcs are autistic, with limited socializing, language and tool use, but well versed in aggression and tactics. They long to find their place in the pack and respond poorly to traits they perceive as weak, such as tenderness and kindness. Some may form attachments to pigs and wolves stronger than to their careers or others of their kind

Orcs are not cultured. Here are a variety of ways orcs are born. They spring forward fully-formed, able to speak and kill

- Any man painted with blood and committing murder that stays away from the sun for a full day becomes an orc
- Any orphan who drinks from a sewer will change into an orc
- After battle, orcs excrete an iridescent black sphere, when soaked in blood an orc hatches. When soaked in demon blood a dozen orcs are born.
- Soak the ground of an ancient tree in blood, and for every wound the tree sustains, it will bud an orc in revenge
- When the teeth of demons are hurled to the ground, they explode and orcs with weapons made from bone leap to battle
- Dogs made to drown in salt water and then left in the lake cause orcs to spawn from the now fouled water
- Orcs have disgusting long spined tongues. After battle they use their tongue to infect the corpses, several hours later, orcs eat their way out of the recent corpse
- They are cooked in unholy cauldrons
- Everyone dies, only they *really don't*. Once you reach a certain age, you change and become an orc
- Marking any corpse with a dark, evil, rune will cause the ground it is buried under to produce orcs
- Humans who eat the flesh of the dead become orcs

Orcs have special combat techniques

- **Orc Fury:** Orcs can go into a battle rage when fighting, granting them an extra bonus to hit and damage equal to 1/2 their hit die (rounded down). This also grants them double this bonus to hit points fear and mind-affecting spells, but penalizes their armor class by 2.
- **Pack Tactics:** For every 2 orcs that attack a target, half may forgo their attack to give a +2 bonus to hit to the other orcs. If the orcs attempt to trip or grapple their opponent, their hit dice (or hit bonus) is doubled for the attempt. Orcs that are bonded with wolves or wargs master this technique
- **Boar's Charge:** If the Orc can move more than 10' to its target, then it can strike with double chances to hit and do an additional x2 damage. Orcs that are bonded with boars or pigs master this technique
- **Boar's Heart:** The Orc is incredibly tough. Its AC is increased by one, and it does not die, until it takes double its total hit points into the negatives, or fails its saving throw versus death after dropping to 0 hit points or below (i.e. an orc with 8 hit points, must start saving versus death when reduced to 0 or below to stay alive. It dies when it reaches -16 hit points automatically).

The ecology series is a crowdsourced series of articles, and contributors can be found on google+ under the hashtag #crowdecology. They are limited posts, but following me on G+ will allow you to see them. All artwork is credited where the artist could be found. Classic ecology articles from [Dragon magazine](#) are used both for reference and inspiration; the whole impetus of the idea was to create 'classic' ecology articles that are actually useful. [Let's Read the Monster Manual](#) by Noisms is also a source of inspiration.